

October 20, 2010

The Honorable Ray LaHood  
Secretary of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood:

We write in strong support of Sun Country Airlines' recent application for an available landing and takeoff slot at Ronald Reagan National Airport. The application is for a flight between Minneapolis, MN and Washington, D.C., via Lansing, MI.

Sun Country Airlines would be a new entrant into Reagan National Airport, expanding competition in a limited market. This flight path would also boost fare competition for travelers in Minnesota, Michigan, and the Washington, D.C. areas. It would be the first entrant to Reagan National Airport from Michigan's state capital in Lansing, and would increase flight options between Minnesota and Washington, D.C. It would provide an immediate economic benefit in both Minnesota and Michigan, resulting in lower fares and increased job opportunities to service the new flights.

The proposed service would be of obvious benefit to Minnesotans. It would create jobs for the Minnesota-based airline Sun Country Airlines, and improve their growing status as a low-cost, high-quality carrier. Minnesota is home to numerous Fortune 500 companies, world-renowned hospitals and medical centers, and tourist destinations. Low-cost, competitive service is essential to both businesses and travelers in the state. This service would also increase the partnership opportunities between the University of Minnesota and Michigan State University, two of our nation's best research universities. Finally, it would save travelers millions of dollars in lower fares, making it easier for Minnesotans to travel to our nation's capital.

Michigan would also benefit from this new route. The Lansing region caters to state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations, and many growing businesses that require transportation to D.C. as a part of their professions. It is inconvenient that Lansing, as the capital of Michigan, currently lacks a direct flight to Washington, D.C. Lansing is a convenient terminal for the 90 percent of Michigan residents who live within 90 minutes of the city. Michigan travelers would clearly benefit from the competition and reduction in airfare provided by Sun Country. In addition, the Lansing region is home to Michigan State University, a top tier research institution. Just last year, MSU received a major contract from the U.S. Department of Energy to house the Facility for Rare Isotope Beams, which will attract researchers and industry internationally. A direct flight from Lansing to D.C. is imperative to support the economic development of the region.

Sun Country is uniquely qualified among the applicants for this slot, in that it is the only route that meets all five criteria that the Department of Transportation must consider under the applicable statute.

In a time of job loss and rising air fares, this application presents an opportunity to provide an economic boost to three metro areas and assist American consumers and workers simultaneously. We appreciate your careful consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Senator Amy Klobuchar

Senator Carl Levin

Senator Debbie Stabenow

Senator Al Franken